

Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A device used to hold and position a blood vessel in the performance of a coronary artery bypass graft procedure, comprising:
a handle;
a collar coupled to the handle, the collar adapted to substantially encircle a blood vessel, the collar having a number of suction apertures; [[and]]
a vacuum port adapted to be coupled to a vacuum source, the vacuum port communicating a suction to the suction apertures to hold the blood vessel;
wherein the collar is comprised of two collar halves that together form a cylinder; and
further comprising a ring for encircling the collar halves to attach the collar halves together.
2. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 2 without prejudice.
3. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 3 without prejudice.
4. (Original) The device of claim 1, wherein the collar is sized to hold an internal mammary artery.
5. (Currently amended) The device of claim 1, wherein the device is sized, shaped and constructed to hold and position a blood vessel that is a graft vessel.
6. (Original) The device of claim 1, wherein the collar has a plurality of suction apertures and the suction apertures are circular.
7. (Original) The device of claim 1, wherein the handle is malleable.
8. (Original) The device of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum line adapted to couple the vacuum port to the vacuum source.

9. (Original) The device of claim 8, wherein the vacuum line is incorporated into the handle.

10. (Currently Amended) A conduit positioning system for use in the performance of a surgical technique on a patient, comprising:

a collar adapted to substantially encircle a conduit in the patient, the collar having a number of suction apertures, wherein the collar is comprised of two collar halves that together form a cylinder with a length;

a vacuum line coupled to the suction apertures, the vacuum line having a length;

a vacuum source coupled to the vacuum line to create a suction at the suction apertures to hold the conduit; and a handle coupled to the attachment head;

wherein the length of the cylinder is substantially less than the length of the vacuum line;
and

further comprising a ring for encircling the collar halves to attach the collar halves together.

11. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 11 without prejudice.

12. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 12 without prejudice.

13. (Currently Amended) The conduit positioning system of claim 10, wherein the collar is sized and shaped to hold an internal mammary artery.

14. (canceled) Please cancel claim 14 without prejudice.

15. (Original) The conduit positioning system of claim 10, wherein the collar has a plurality of suction apertures and the suction apertures are circular.

16. (Original) The conduit positioning system of claim 10, wherein the handle is malleable.

17. (Original) The conduit positioning system of claim 10, wherein the vacuum line is incorporated into the handle.

18. (Withdrawn) A method of performing coronary artery bypass grafting surgery, comprising: creating an opening in a patient to access the heart of the patient; harvesting a blood vessel from the patient for use as a graft vessel; providing a vessel holding and positioning device, the vessel holding and positioning device having a collar adapted to substantially encircle the blood vessel, the collar having a number of suction apertures adapted to engage the blood vessel; providing a vacuum source coupled to the collar to create a suction at the suction apertures; inserting the blood vessel into the collar; holding the blood vessel with the suction apertures; positioning an end of the blood vessel with the vessel holding and positioning device at an anastomosis site on a second blood vessel; coupling the end of the blood vessel to the second blood vessel to create an anastomosis; removing the collar from the blood vessel; and closing the opening in the patient.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein the blood vessel is an internal mammary artery or a greater saphenous vein.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 19, wherein the collar comprises a plurality of wall portions coupled together with a ring and wherein the removing step comprises cutting the ring to remove the wall portions from around the blood vessel.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, further comprising stopping the heart before creating the anastomosis.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein the opening is a median sternotomy, a mini-sternotomy, or a left anterior thoracotomy.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein the opening is an endoscopic port.
24. (Original) A blood vessel positioning device for use in cardiac surgery, comprising:
a handle; and a first collar and a second collar coupled to the handle,
the second collar separated from the first collar by a first distance, each collar adapted to substantially encircle a blood vessel and having a number of suction apertures,
wherein the suction apertures are adapted to engage and hold the blood vessel.
25. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 24, wherein the handle comprises a first prong and a second prong, the first prong attached to the first collar and the second prong attached to the second collar.
26. (Currently Amended) The blood vessel positioning device of claim ~~[[24]]~~ 25, wherein the first and second prongs are malleable ~~whereby the distance may be changed~~.
27. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 24, wherein the collars are sized to encircle an internal mammary artery.
28. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 24, further comprising a vacuum source coupled to the suction apertures.
29. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 24, further comprising a vacuum line coupling the vacuum source to the first and second collars.
30. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 29, wherein the vacuum line is incorporated into the handle.

31. (Original) The blood vessel positioning device of claim 24, wherein each collar has a plurality of suction apertures and the suction apertures are circular.

32. (Withdrawn) A method of creating an arteriotomy in a blood vessel, comprising: creating an opening in a patient to access a selected blood vessel in which to create the arteriotomy; providing a vessel holding and positioning device, the vessel holding and positioning device having at least two collars with a gap between one another, each collar adapted to substantially encircle the blood vessel, the collars each having a number of suction apertures adapted to engage the blood vessel; providing a vacuum source coupled to the collars to create a suction at the suction apertures; inserting the blood vessel into the collars; holding the blood vessel with the suction apertures, an exposed portion of the blood vessel residing in the gap; and creating an arteriotomy in the exposed portion of the blood vessel.

33. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, wherein the vacuum source is coupled to the collars via a vacuum line incorporated into the handle.

34. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 33, wherein the blood vessel is an internal mammary artery.

35. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, wherein the opening is a median sternotomy, a mini-sternotomy, or a left anterior thoracotomy.

36. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, wherein the opening is an endoscopic port.

37. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, further comprising attaching a second blood vessel to the arteriotomy to create an anastomosis.